

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (Canceled)

2. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 2 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.
3. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 3 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

Claims 4-6 (Canceled)

7. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 7 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.
8. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 8 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.
9. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 9 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

Claims 10 – 11 (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 24 ~~44~~ further comprising means for introducing a negative pressure contained within each said block-shaped housing ~~said block~~ and connected to each of said plurality of suction ports.

Claim 13 (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 12 wherein each said suction port has a

passage communication with a pressure conducting space on the interior of said block-shaped housing block, respectively, and wherein the pressure conducting space has an inlet which is fluidly connectable with the vacuum line.

Claims 15-16 (Canceled)

17. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 17 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

18. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 18 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

19. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 19 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

20. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 20 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

21. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 21 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

22. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 22 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

23. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 23 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

24. (Currently Amended) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: first and second shafts joined by an articulating link; first and second suction port assemblies, wherein said first shaft is attached to said first suction port assembly and said second shaft is attached to said second port assembly; wherein each said suction port assembly is placed in a block-shaped housing comprised of a block having a bottom contact surface configured to engage the surface

of the heart, and a plurality of suction ports having openings disposed in said a bottom surface thereof,
and wherein each said block-shaped housing block is attached to a vacuum line.

Claims 25-30 (Canceled)

31. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 31 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

32. (Previously Presented) As part of a surgical procedure on the heart, a method comprising the steps of:

accessing a surface of the heart;

providing an instrument comprising first and second shafts interlinked by a pivot, wherein the first shaft is attached to a first member having at least one suction port therein, and said second shaft is attached to a second member having at least one suction port therein;

contacting the members with the surface of the heart;

applying a negative pressure to said suction ports, thereby attaching the members to the surface of the heart; and

manipulating the interlinked shafts via the pivot such that the members move with respect to one another, while each member maintains attachment to the surface of the heart.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of attaching the instrument to a stable support.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 32, further comprising the step of performing a coronary artery bypass graft procedure on the heart.

35. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 35 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

36. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 36 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein..

37. (Currently Amended) A device for imposing a negative pressure on the surface of the heart comprising: first and second shafts joined by suction members interconnected through an articulating link; each of said suction members comprising a contact surface adapted to contact the surface of the heart, each said suction member being configured to apply negative pressure to the surface of the heart so as to fix said contact surface against the surface of the heart first and second suction port assemblies, wherein said first shaft is attached to said first suction port assembly and said second shaft is attached to said second port assembly; wherein each said suction port assembly is comprised of a block having a plurality of suction ports disposed therein, and wherein each said block is attached to a vacuum line.

38. (Previously Presented) As part of a surgical procedure on the heart, a method comprising the steps of:

accessing a surface of the heart;

providing an instrument comprising first and second shafts joined by an articulating link, wherein the first shaft is attached to a first member having at least one suction port therein, and said second shaft is attached to a second member having at least one suction port therein;

contacting the members with the surface of the heart;

applying a negative pressure to said suction ports, thereby attaching the members to the surface of the heart; and

manipulating the interlinked shafts through the articulating link such that the members move with respect to one another, while each member maintains attachment to the surface of the heart.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38, further comprising the step of attaching the instrument to a stable support.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 38, further comprising the step of performing a coronary artery bypass graft procedure on the heart.

41. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 41 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

42. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 42 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

43. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 43 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

44. (Canceled) Please cancel claim 44 without prejudice to the possibility of filing one or more continuing applications directed to the subject matter recited therein.

45. (New) As part of a surgical procedure on the heart, a method comprising the steps of: accessing a surface of the heart;

providing an instrument comprising first and second suction members interlinked by an articulating link;

contacting the surface of the heart with the suction members;

applying a negative pressure to said suction members, thereby attaching the suction members to the surface of the heart; and

manipulating the suction members through the articulating link such that the suction members move with respect to one another, while each suction member maintains attachment to the surface of the heart.